

Volpe's order: No roads before relocation housing



Secretary Volpe
Ties relocation to roads.

"Projects of the Department of Transportation will not be approved if they involve the dislocation of people, black or white, unless and until adequate replacement has already been provided for and built," DOT Secretary John A. Volpe told his administrators in a memo this week. With this policy directive issued by the secretary, replacement housing is now firmly tied to the fate of urban freeways.

If cities are unable to provide the required housing under Volpe's new directive, the program, already stalled, may be quietly dropped. A public termination of urban freeway construction by Volpe would be politically unpopular, but by tossing the problem into the laps of big city mayors, he puts the responsibility on them.

Pointing out that DOT projects annually displace 70,000 persons, some 50,000 of them by the highway program alone, Volpe ordered the new procedures placed into effect immediately. The new replacement housing policy calls for: Specific written assurance that adequate replacement housing will be available (built, if necessary) before the initial approval of any project; Construction will be authorized only upon verification that replacement housing is in place and has been made

available to all affected persons; and all replacement housing must be fair housing, open to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Volpe also pointed out that this is in addition to the existing policy that replacement housing must be offered on a nondiscriminatory basis.

The policy applies to highways, airports, transit systems, and will have an impact both on the urban freeway program and the anticipated mass transportation program now before Congress.

"The object is to provide comparable or better housing," Volpe said. "Basically, this mandate was in the Highway Act of 1968. Now we have broadened and strengthened that," he pointed out.

Providing this housing will cost more, but Volpe said that they don't know and would not know how much until a project goes ahead. In many cities, people can easily find their own housing, but this policy is intended to aid those who can't or don't because of low vacancy rates in many urban areas.

While Volpe did not indicate how replacement housing might be financed, he said that the Federal Highway Administration is working with the Department of Housing and Urban De-

velopment (HUD), which may have the money on hand for such projects.

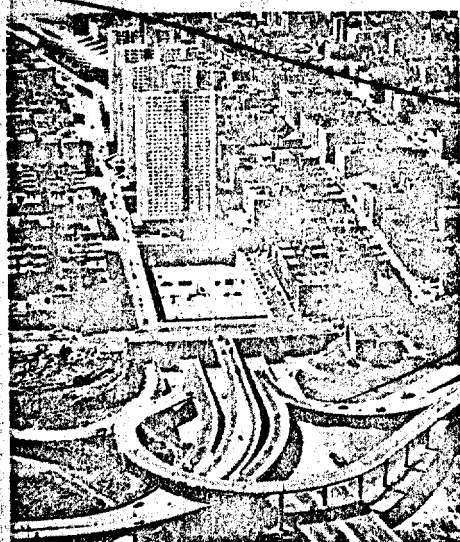
The secretary also indicated that urban freeways may be built in short sections. Housing possibly could be built on air rights on one section, people could be relocated, then the rest of the expressway could go ahead.

Volpe stopped short of advocating use of Highway Trust Fund money for replacement housing, a step some observers had expected. However, those close to Volpe say, "He is the master of the wedge." By throwing the ball to the mayors, it might set them to light a fire under HUD or Congress to provide the funds, possibly tapping the trust fund.

The District of Columbia highway department recently asked for permission to find and build housing for persons dislocated by freeway construction.

More and more city planners and highway designers are accepting the view that replacement housing should be a direct cost of the highway program, and therefore the trust fund should pay for it.

New restriction may revive joint development



Housing for persons dislocated by highways routed through residential areas may leap from the hands of design concept teams to highway corridors. DOT's latest restriction on highway planners may provide the impetus.

Joint development is seen as a means to rehabilitate areas in urban renewal and model city projects in addition to replacing housing demolished for highways. Such plans make optimum use of space in high density, urban areas and include multiple use of space above, below and surrounding highways.

Although not part of the original expressway plans, a privately-financed apartment complex over the Manhattan approach to the George Washing-

is a rare example of airspace use.

A similar plan for Washington, D.C., exists for low-cost housing to replace residences being destroyed for the Inner Loop (Interstate 95). The Chicago Crosstown Expressway, now under construction, includes plans for housing and industrial developments on the land strip which divides the eight-lane highway.

Multiple-use projects, mostly small, have been developed across the country since the 1930s, but never really caught on. In 1968, the Bureau of Public Roads announced that federal highway funds may be used for corridor wide acquisition and site improvement. Still financing and legal difficulties have held